

WASHINGTON — The conservative wing of the House Republican majority — including four newly elected upstate New Yorkers — unveiled a broad plan Thursday to slash spending on most federal programs and eliminate the subsidies that pay for commercial air service in Northern New York.

Because the proposal comes from one end of the political spectrum, it is unlikely to advance in its current form. But it marks a beginning point for discussions in the GOP-led House and could force the Democratic-led Senate to at least scale back many programs the Democrats have expanded in recent years.

The legislation from the Republican Study Committee aims to save a total of \$2.5 trillion over a decade, which leaders said will help restore the government's financial balance and fulfill the wishes of voters who swept the Republicans into the majority in the House for the first time since 2006.

"Today is the day we finally stop kicking the can down the road," said Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., for years a leading House advocate for cutting government spending, at a press conference.

The lawmakers said eliminating the flight subsidies through the Essential Air Service program would save \$150 million, most likely ending flights to Watertown, Massena, Ogdensburg, Saranac Lake and Plattsburgh.

Eliminating a Department of Energy program to help protect homes in low-income areas against harsh weather, used in about 340 homes in Jefferson County this fiscal year, would save \$530 million a year, sponsors of the legislation said. And they indicated they were open to further cuts in weatherization programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A program to help small manufacturing companies boost productivity through technology, called the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, would go as well, saving \$125 million annually.

The lawmakers also proposed to eliminate funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, which helps fund development projects in the Appalachian region from New York to Georgia and northern Mississippi; they did not mention the Northern Border Regional Commission, a similar organization established by Congress a few years ago which covers areas represented by Rep. William L. Owens, D-Plattsburgh, as well as three members of the Republican Study Committee — Reps. Ann Marie Buerkle, R-Onondaga Hill; Richard Hanna, R-Barneveld; and Chris Gibson, R-Kinderhook.

They identified dozens of other programs to cut or eliminate, saving a total of \$330 billion over 10 years.

Among larger programs targeted, the legislation would save \$16 billion by repealing the increase in Medicaid reimbursement funding the Democratic-led Congress passed as part of a state aid package.

In addition, the lawmakers proposed to freeze spending for the rest of this fiscal year at levels set in 2008 and to block all funding for the health care reform law, saving \$80 billion; set spending for the next decade at 2006 levels, with the exception of programs targeted for elimination.

While all of the programs have constituencies that will be offended at losing programs, lawmakers said, the bill represents a more important, broad goal of addressing the climbing federal debt and reining in spending.

"Everything on this pales in comparison to saving the country," said Rep. John Campbell, R-Calif.

Mr. Owens, D-Plattsburgh, said he expects the end result to be a compromise over spending levels as Democrats resist the deepest cuts and even Republican leaders back away from the most ambitious proposals.

"I think as the impact of those proposals becomes known to constituents, there will be

considerably less enthusiasm," Mr. Owens said.

Indeed, the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, said he had not discussed with the GOP leadership whether the bill will come to the floor for a vote, though he said he is optimistic that many provisions will find a way there.

Five New York lawmakers are on the committee that drafted the proposal, including four members new to Congress this year — Ms. Buerkle, Mr. Hanna, Mr. Gibson, and Tom Reed, R-Corning.

Ms. Buerkle said she has not signed on to the bill yet. She neither ruled out nor said she supports cuts to Amtrak and weatherization programs but said people need to "keep the big picture in mind."

"I think we need to have a frank conversation with the American people," Ms. Buerkle said. "There are lots of great programs out there, but we just can't afford it."